



By Ruth Chen
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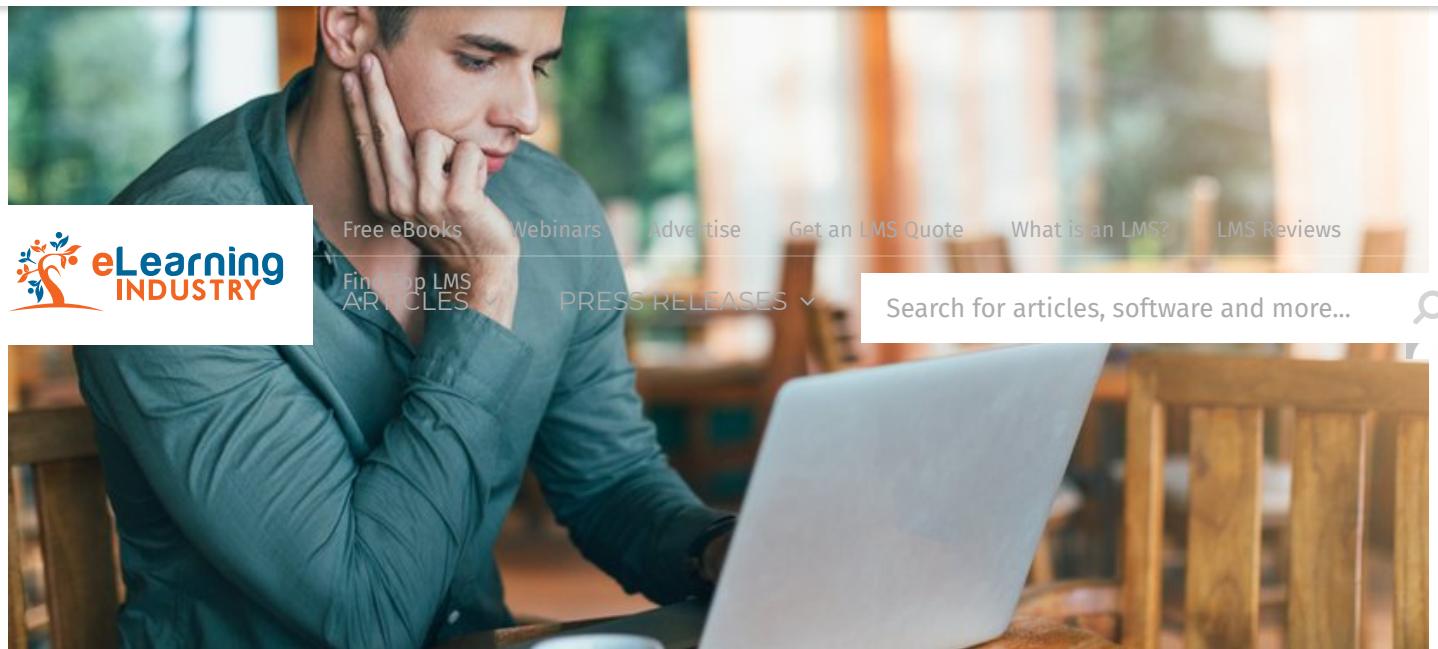
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How To Cut High Dropout Rates Of Online Courses

More students are signing up for online classes, but more are also dropping out. Why the high dropout rates of online courses? A major reason is that students are not prepared for the class' time, academic, and technology requirements. Here are practical ways teachers and institutions can reset student expectations.



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Why Are Dropout Rates Of Online Courses So High? Expectations May Be A Big Part Of It

Studies show that, although online class registrations are increasing, up to [40-80%](#) of online students drop out! Many students choose online learning versus traditional classrooms because they think that online classes may be less of a burden on their lives, whether in terms of finances or time. The cost of classes, because it is solely within the domain of institutions, is outside of the scope of this article, as this article will focus on the time expectations. Certainly, online classes can eliminate the time spent commuting to a classroom. However, some learners also expect that online classes may be easier and require less time and effort. But that may not always be the case, especially given the student's own academic and technology proficiency. Here are some practical ways to bridge the gap between students' expectations and the reality of eLearning.

5 Tips To Prepare Students Before The Course

1. Provide Proactive Academic Advisory

Studies show that students who were more academically ready, as measured by having [higher GPAs](#) before the start of the online courses, were more likely to complete the courses. Institutions should provide academic advisory support for online students so that students are enrolling in appropriate classes. Institutions and teachers can work together to see if any classes are prerequisites.

2. Highlight Prerequisites

Teachers should be clear in course descriptions, warning students of any required knowledge or skills that are needed before the class. If appropriate, teachers can provide links and [resources](#) to teach that knowledge or skills or else require other classes first.

3. Include Time Estimates In Course Descriptions

While online classes usually allow for more flexibility, with flexibility comes uncertainty and the heightened need for clarity. When writing course selection guides, list the estimated or required amount of hours per week to complete the work in the course description. Certainly if there are specific times when students must be online, those hours must also be noted so that students can more accurately see if they can commit to the class. The description should give students a realistic idea of what type of work and major assignments are required.

4. Consider Student Comments

On typical in-person campuses, students have an advantage of getting to discuss with peers about courses, including asking others about classes that others have taken previously taken in order to gauge a class beforehand. In the [online course](#) selection guide, or else in an introduction or orientation to the course, a comments section can be provided for previous students to leave tips for new students. In order to gather more tips, this comments section can be a part of a typical survey that is given to students at the end of a course. The teacher can moderate the section to ensure that the tips are helpful and appropriate.

5. Invest In Tech Support And Documentation

technology and even students who consider themselves familiar with regular online use may have trouble figuring out the specifics of the LMS (Learning Management System) or the online class. Tech requirements and instructions should be detailed so that students know how to access the course. Institutions should ensure that online students can easily access tech support, whether online or by phone. Screen-recording software, such as [EverCam](#), can be used to produce step-by-step video tutorials.

5 Tips To Guide Students Throughout The Course

Convey your expectations at the beginning of the class and reinforce them throughout the class. Repetition is your (and your students') friend!

1. Make The Most Of Orientation

The start of the course should include: a welcome message, expectations, rules, a syllabus with assignment due dates, course goals, required materials (including any books and tech), and any other useful information to help students anticipate the scope of the class.

2. Demonstrate Student Tasks

Orientation should also outline required technology and instructions for using it. Brief step-by-step screen-recorded [videos](#) can easily demonstrate tasks and technology required for the class, such as how to [upload](#) an assignment, where to find an online discussion module, or how to log in to an online exam.

3. Structure The Course Into Manageable Sessions

The syllabus and course should be designed in clearly scheduled, manageable sections that help students know at a glance how much they have progressed and how much more work needs to be done so that students can plan accordingly.

4. Make Instructions Clear And Explicit

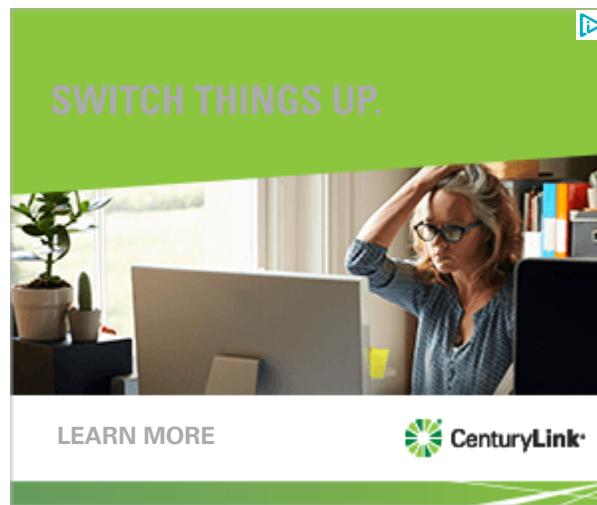
To prevent misunderstandings, teachers should be sure that clear instructions detailing requirements accompany each assignment. In addition to having written instructions, teachers can record [videos](#) that more clearly explain or demonstrate how to complete or

5. Telegraph Final Exams And Projects

Especially as the end of the course nears, but also throughout the course, teachers can help prepare their students for the final exams and projects by pointing out certain content and skills that will be vital. Teachers can break down portions of the final projects so that students can begin working on them earlier, such as assigning students when to begin brainstorming ideas or when to start researching. By continually reminding and preparing students for the final exams and projects, teachers help students anticipate and expect to finish.

Preparing student expectations before and throughout the course can reduce the drop-out rate. Students who have a proper sense of the class' time, academics, and technology are students who can finish strong.

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